

Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: September 16, 2003

Date Submitted: September 10, 2003

To: Members of the Board

From: Tony Grippa, Chairman *10*

Subject: Consideration of Donation of Fencing Material for ECHO's Bethany Family Apartments Children's Playground

Statement of Issue:

Board consideration of donation of 466 linear feet of commercial-grade fencing, 6 feet in height, with a gate on one end for commercial equipment to enter for maintenance.

Background:

Bethany Family Apartments, located at 2221 S. Meridian Road, provides emergency shelter and assistance for families in crisis. ECHO, (Emergency Care Help Organization) opened the Bethany Family Apartments in August 2001. The 13-unit apartment averages 40 families a year. Many of the families have small children, with an average age between 7 and 10 years old. If the County donates surplus fence, it could save ECHO \$4,000.00-\$5,000.00 and provide the children with a playground immediately. The playground cannot be utilized by the children until the fence is up.

Options:

1. Approve donation of fencing material to ECHO's Bethany Family Apartments for children's playground.
2. Do not approve donation of fencing material.
3. Board Direction.

Recommendation:

Board Direction.

Attachment:

1. Homeless Playground Fact Sheet
2. Backgrounder: ECHO (Emergency Care Help Organization)

Homeless Playground Fact Sheet

Name of project: ECHO Homeless Children's Playground (John Gaskins Memorial Playground)

Location: ECHO's Homeless Families Shelter, Bethany Family Apartments, 2221 South Meridian Rd., Tallahassee, FL.

Purpose of project: To provide a safe environment to play for the more than 30 children residing at Bethany Family Apartments. Currently, the only place for the children to play is a parking lot. The new playground will allow children to play in a safe, age appropriate recreational area.

Donations needed: Contributions are needed for playground equipment, fencing, landscaping materials, and site preparation. Volunteer labor, building materials, and food (for work days) are also needed. To make a contribution, contact Colleen Barton at (850) 224-6500.

Unique Information: The ECHO playground will serve children who live in emergency and short-term housing for homeless families. The Bethany Family Apartments serve as temporary home to more than 48 families a year. These children have been through very difficult times. Playing gives them an opportunity to work through the stress and anxiety associated with being homeless. Playing is a necessary part of their healing process.

Partners: The partners for the ECHO Playground Project include the Genesis Group, Florida State University Center for Civic Education and Service, FSU students and Tallahassee 25. FSU students who are partnering in the project are former Service Leadership Seminar participants.

Donors: Center for Civic Education and Service, Delta Phi Delta National Multicultural Fraternity, Inc., Koski Design Group

Contact: For information, contact Anna O'Sullivan at (850) 644-1620, or email at ao'sullivan@admin.fsu.edu.

Attachment # 1Page 3 of 5

Background: ECHO (Emergency Care Help Organization)

ECHO was founded in 1981 by a group of Tallahassee churches and concerned citizens who realized a need for a central location to help individuals and families in crisis. Having served the Tallahassee and Leon County community for 22 years, ECHO is one of the largest outreach efforts in the community, providing food, clothing, housing, emergency financial assistance, employment assistance and much more. ECHO has three main divisions: Emergency Services, Employment Services and Homeless Family Services.

More than 4,000 people visit ECHO's Emergency Services Division each year. Individuals seeking assistance are interviewed by a counselor to assess the crisis and determine what help is needed. For example, an emergency utility or rent payment may be made to keep a family in their home while waiting for the next paycheck to arrive.

In response to the need for employment assistance, ECHO added Jubilee Job-Link (JJ-L) in 1999. Their goal is to assist those in need in finding, and keeping, employment. Jubilee Job-Link prepares eager, capable job applicants to meet the needs of Tallahassee employers, and continues to coach and mentor those newly employed for up to a year.

In August 2001, ECHO opened Bethany Family Apartments, providing emergency and short-term shelter for families in a housing crisis. Bethany Family Apartments gives shelter to an average of 48 families a year, as well as food, clothing, case management, and other assistance geared to help families become self-sufficient and attain permanent housing. Children (from newborn to 17 years) make up the largest population at Bethany.

ECHO's mission is to exemplify faith in action by providing holistic services designed to promote self-sufficiency and empowerment of people in crisis and those living under the burden of poverty. For more information about ECHO, contact Trudy Barnum at 878-6088, or email her at echo@usttally.com.

###